

# HOUSING BEGINS AT HOME

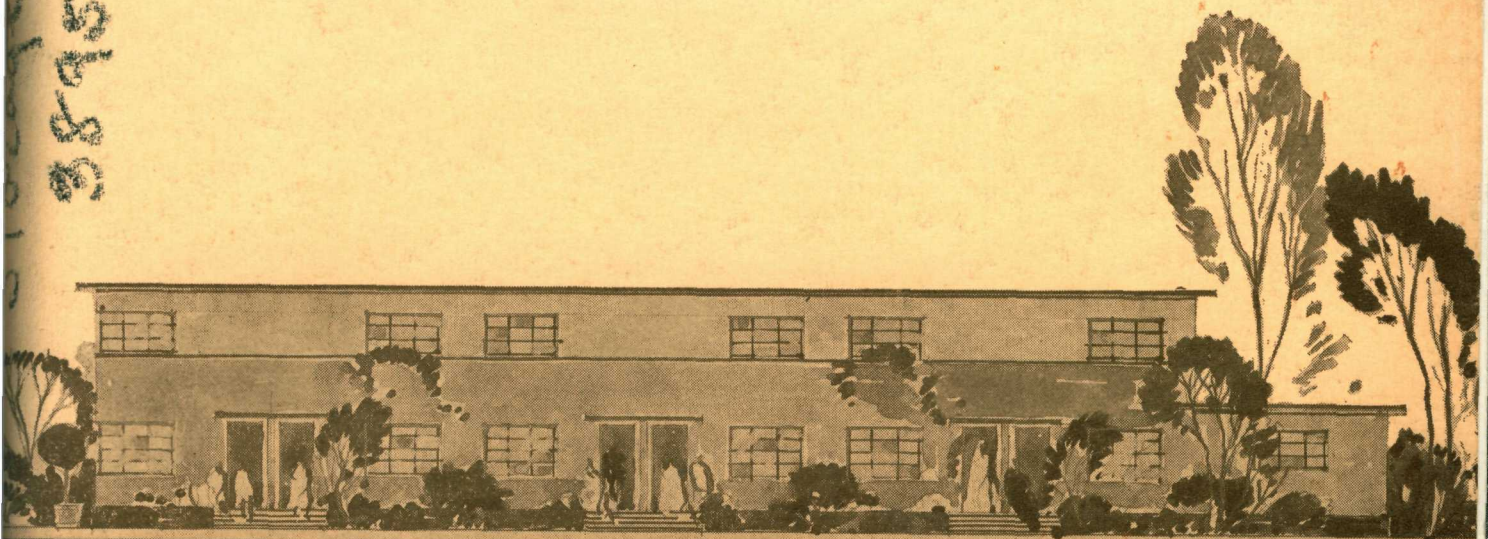
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF OAKLAND  
CALIFORNIA

1940

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ANNUAL REPORT



## PREFACE

"The end to be achieved is the quality of men and women. If the moral fibre of its manhood and its womanhood is not a state concern, the question is, what is?"—Justice Benjamin Cardozo.

No one enjoys facing disagreeable facts. Some of us must. Most of us know of Oakland's fine public buildings and beautiful homes. We are justly proud of our city. But we are ignorant of the squalor existing right now in certain sections housing the low income group. The countless toll of disease and misery, failure and discouragement that arises from bad housing, and its deteriorating effect on family life is known to every thinking American. The predominant purpose of the Oakland Housing Authority is to eliminate substandard housing and to provide new housing for persons of low income.

We might indeed call the work of the Housing Authority "defense" housing. It is engaged in working in defense of the smallest democracy, the family.

The Housing Authority is sparing no effort to harmonize the low rent housing program with the general life of the city. It is the desire of the Authority that these projects when completed shall become a vital, constructive and healthy asset to the welfare of our community.

The interest manifested in the Housing Authority and its work has been most gratifying. Your Authority believes that its accomplishments for the past year justify this interest. However, if the housing conditions in Oakland are to be improved, there must be a constant effort to stimulate influential citizens to the need of bettering the living standards of others.



WARREN E. SISSON  
Executive Director and Secretary

January 1, 1941.

Honorable William J. McCracken, Mayor,  
and Members of the City Council,  
Oakland, California.

Gentlemen:

The Housing Authority of the City of Oakland submits herewith its Second Annual report for the period ending December 31, 1940.

This report covers activities of your Housing Authority and is submitted in accordance with the Housing Authorities Law of the State of California. An official copy of the report has been submitted to the City Clerk of the City of Oakland.

Respectfully submitted,

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE  
CITY OF OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

HENRY W. HALER

Chairman

CHARLES D. CARROLL

Vice-Chairman

JOHN P. BRENNAN

Commissioner

NORMAN OGILVIE

Commissioner

HUGH S. RUTLEDGE

Commissioner



HENRY W. HALER



CHARLES D. CARROLL



JOHN P. BRENNAN



NORMAN OGILVIE



HUGH S. RUTLEDGE



## COMMISSIONERS AND ACTIVITIES

On June 5, 1940, it became necessary for the Authority's first Chairman, Fred A. Ferroggiaro, to resign because of his appointment as Executive Vice-President of the Bank of America in the San Francisco Main Office. In addition to his Chairmanship of the Authority he also devoted a great deal of time to other community service activities. His assistance and interest in the Authority and other organizations will be missed.

To fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Ferroggiaro, Mayor William J. McCracken appointed Henry W. Haler, president of the Apartment House Association of Alameda County, who was elected chairman of the Housing Authority soon after his appointment. From the inception Mayor McCracken endeavored to harmonize the apartment house owners with the program of the Authority, and there now exists complete cooperation and understanding between them. Following frank assurances from the Mayor, private owners have accepted the fact that there is a necessary and legitimate field for low rent housing in this community and that there are no elements of competition involved.

Commissioner Charles D. Carroll, whose term expired, was reappointed for a four-year term to 1944 by the Mayor in recognition of his services since the organization of the Authority in 1938.

Commissioners Hugh S. Rutledge, John P. Brennan and Norman Ogilvie complete the board of the Authority.

During 1940 the Authority has taken an interest in various housing legislation pending in the State Legislature and Congress, and it is anticipated because of the urgency of defense housing needs that vital measures will soon be enacted. To look into the passage of this legislation the California State Housing Authorities Association was created in March, 1940, and Commissioner Brennan became its Vice-President. The newly organized Western States Housing Authorities Association, to which Chairman Haler was appointed as Authority representative, recently selected Mr. Haler as Vice-President. Father Emmett McLoughlin, the Chairman of the Phoenix Authority, is the President. Coordination of the various housing problems affecting the local housing authorities in the seven Western states will now be effectively cleared in this organization.



Campbell Village Before Demolition—Nothing to Be Proud of.

## DO WE NEED PUBLIC HOUSING?

An extensive report on the need for low rent housing was made in the first Annual Report of your Authority covering the activities from date of organization in 1938 through 1939. It was based on the Real Property Survey made in 1936 by W.P.A. workers under the supervision of the City Planning Commission. Briefly, the report showed that at least 25% of all dwellings in Oakland renting for under \$20 a month were substandard either because they were unfit for use or in need of major repairs, which meant, according to the criteria used by the enumerators that there were about 5,000 dwelling units in the city in which families were living under unsafe or insanitary conditions. This figure is a conservative one, since the enumerators did not list conditions within the home, but used only data obtainable from the householder at the door of his home.

A supplementary survey was made in 1939 by the Housing Authority which showed that there were 7,041 occupied substandard dwelling units in the City of Oakland, renting under \$20 per month, or 36.6% of all dwellings in that rental range. In addition to these, there were 923 occupied substandard dwelling units renting between \$20 and \$25 a month. Many of these dwelling units are occupied by families who, because of the housing shortage, are paying too high a percentage of their incomes for rent, which, according to budget experts, should not be more than one-fifth of the amount of income received. A large percentage of them will be eligible for tenancy in the housing projects now being constructed.

According to a report recently made by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce (December, 1940), 2260 new families have moved into the city during the past eleven months. Increased





activity at the Alameda Naval Air Station and the Oakland Naval Supply Depot, together with expansion of local industries handling national defense orders, are given as the primary reasons for the increase in population. The United States Army is at the present time negotiating for a \$20,000,000 army base to be set up here. It can easily be imagined that the Housing Authority's projects in Oakland will help to house the families of the men working with the Government, many of whom will be eligible for tenancy because of their low incomes.

There is also a likelihood that the already existing shortage of low rent dwellings in the city will become acute as these defense workers and their families move into the city. There is already a shortage of low rent housing at the present time in Oakland, but with the influx of defense workers the shortage will become serious. A shortage such as this forces rents up and standards down. Housing is at a premium.

The housing problem in Oakland is not merely one of demolishing substandard dwellings and supplying decent ones to take their places, but of helping to remedy the shortage of homes for families of low income. An analysis of the number of new dwelling units, evidenced by the building permits issued, indicates that a total of only 5,732 individual family accommodations were made available between January 1, 1930, and January 1, 1939. Yet it is estimated that there has been an increase of approximately 9,350 families during that time. The cost of the dwellings constructed, as secured from the building permits, clearly indicates that **none** of these buildings are available to persons of low income. It is reasonable to assume that a considerable portion of the families who came to Oakland during that period belonged to the lower income group.

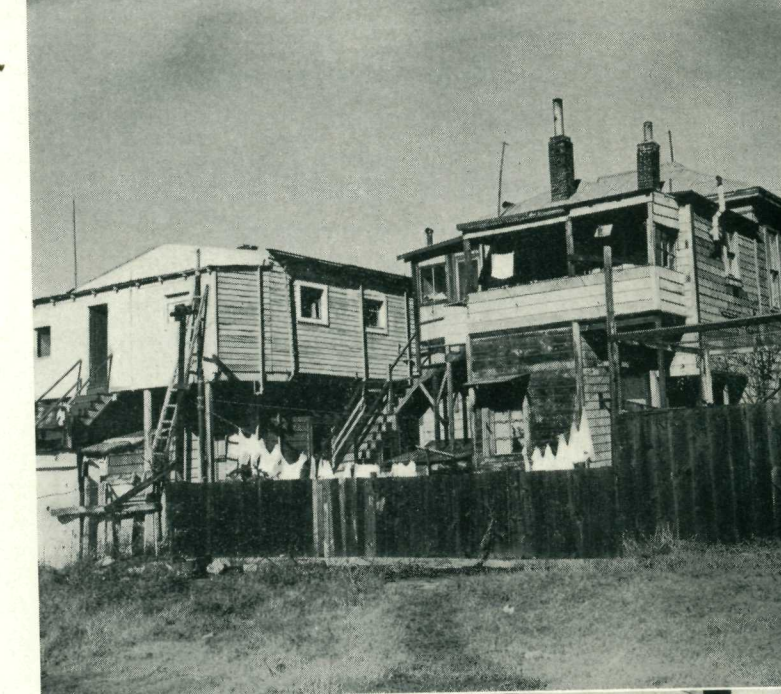
"Housing for the lower paid section of the community does not

Substandard Housing in Oakland must go! These buildings were demolished when the site of Peralta Villa was cleared.

compete and does not injure the interests of what we call private building enterprise, or what I think you call real estate men . . . The poorer sections of the community cannot afford to provide the inducements which make it worthwhile for speculative builders to undertake to build houses for those people on any basis which they can afford. We have tried that. We have found that they cannot do it. They are not doing it today. They have not done it at any time. . . ."

The above is quoted from an address made in 1933 by the late Sir Raymond Unwin, famous English housing expert, and special lecturer and consultant on housing at Columbia University. An important consideration in a public housing program is its effect in stimulating private enterprise and in reducing unemployment. The United States Housing Authority will loan close to \$900,000,000 to be spent on housing throughout the country. There can be no doubt that the manufacturers will derive great benefit from this new demand for material and equipment, aside from the much larger benefits to be derived from the contractors and the persons to be employed in the building trades. It will also indirectly encourage the private investor to remodel his rented property which he had given up as a loss because of property value decline in a blighted area. Experiences of this sort on the part of the private investor should do much to silence the criticism directed at any and all public housing undertakings. It is now realized that, in addition to its great social value, the restoration of "dead" urban areas by public agencies enhances the value of adjacent property and encourages building for self-supporting families. The mere presence of modern, well-planned, and attractive buildings for the poor in any community is an incentive to families of moderate income to improve their own living conditions, which, of course, opens new opportunities to private builders.

Children played in and around these dirty backyards on the Peralta Villa Site. Ample play space is provided in the project.





The sites of Campbell Village and Peralta Villa were chosen after a survey had been made by the City Planning Commission, and this particular neighborhood was found to be rapidly approaching an advanced state of decay. Since these projects are the first to be constructed by the Oakland Housing Authority, and since the first one will not be completed and ready for occupancy until late spring, it is impossible to state exactly what benefits this neighborhood has derived from the project. However, if we are to believe the experience of other local authorities throughout the United States, the benefits not only to the rehoused families, but to the neighboring properties, and therefore to the private owners of the community, will be inestimable. Public housing is only competitive to substandard buildings which long since have outlived their usefulness and more than repaid the original investment.

The reduction in the cost of government directly traceable to public housing is expected to be considerable. In Indianapolis an analysis of eleven census tracts or areas, containing approximately 10% of the population of the city, showed that the areas containing the worst housing were the greatest economic drain. Per capita expenses to the city in those areas for felonies, misdemeanors, and juvenile delinquency, maintaining the city hospital, caring for venereal diseases, distributing public relief, caring for insanity, extinguishing fires, and maintaining family welfare societies amounted to \$27.29, while in other districts they came to only \$14. Of all the money spent in Indianapolis for this character of public service, 26% went for the benefit of this 10% of the population.

Similarly, in March, 1934, in a report made in Cleveland on the economic cost of a certain small slum district it was found that it produced but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of 1% of the city's income from taxation, yet absorbed 4.5% of the money spent for police protection, 7.3% of the expenses for health work, 8.1% of relief and social service expenditures and 14.4% of the cost of fire protection.

All of these studies, and others which have recently been made tend strongly to confirm the widely held belief that slum areas cost the taxpayers more than any other part of the city. In Oakland, we are fortunate because we are growing in a more enlightened age than were these older Eastern cities; for now when signs of grey and blight have begun to show, rehabilitation steps in to substitute substantial and modern planned public housing projects to insure our Western city against the word "slum" for the next sixty years.

## PROJECT SITES AND LAND ACQUISITION

One of the most important considerations in housing is the choice of sites. Here is a problem that must be solved in accordance with the most complete technical information available. Shall we choose a vacant site? Shall we choose a site where the worst housing in the city exists? Shall we choose a blighted area in which the housing conditions are admittedly not the worst in the city, but where property values are declining and the surrounding area likewise is suffering from the effects of this internal decay? The correct answers to these questions vary from one community to another. In Oakland, the various alternatives were all carefully considered in determining the very best solution for our own local problem. Each possibility was judged in relation to the city as a whole, and to the future use of land, in order that the contemplated housing projects might achieve their greatest usefulness over the longest period of time. It was found that areas which contain the worst housing are surrounded by industry and their industrial nature makes them unsuitable for residential purposes for sixty years, the life-period of U.S.H.A.-aided projects. Land values in congested areas, where the need for reclamation is most acute, are usually far above the price of vacant sites of equal size on the outskirts of town.

Vacant sites were deemed suitable for future projects, but unwise for our first projects. Rather it was believed that housing in Oakland must primarily be preventive, and that the greatest usefulness of our first housing projects would be in our blighted areas. Here they would serve as stop-gaps to prevent further deterioration of these neighborhoods and preserve a normal, healthy community life therein before the decay of the area progressed so far that serious social problems would result.

The Authority has chosen three sites on which will be erected some 922 dwelling units, at an estimated cost of \$4,500,000. The projects known as Cal. 3-1, Peralta Villa, and Cal. 3-2, Campbell Village, located in the West Oakland section of the city, are both clearance sites. On these two sites, there were 222 structures in varying degrees of usefulness. They contained 288 dwelling units which violated one or more sections of the State Housing Law and City Building Codes, thus making them substandard.





BEFORE: Site of Campbell Village, Project Cal. 3-2, before demolition.

Peralta Villa is bounded by Eighth, Twelfth, Cypress and Union Streets. The assessed valuation of the land was \$217,175, on which the taxes levied in 1938 were \$11,032.50. Campbell Village is bounded by Eighth, Tenth, Willow and Campbell Streets. Its assessed valuation was \$53,000, and the taxes levied were \$2,692.40. These figures show a loss of \$13,700 in taxes and a gain of \$3,000,000 in civic improvement. Both areas are within reasonable distance of schools, parks, and industrial districts with their employment opportunities.

The Authority encountered unexpected difficulties when attempting to purchase many of the properties. Experienced real estate negotiators found it extremely difficult to obtain options within the price limits set by USHA appraisers. Property owners demanded much higher prices than the location and the condition of the properties warranted. As a result, the Authority in some instances was forced to exercise its right of eminent domain and bring condemnation proceedings in the courts. The court actions filed on Peralta Villa and Campbell Village were pending over a year before the value was established, and appeals to the higher court are still pending. The filing of separate actions against each condemned parcel instead of a joint action resulted in settlement of many cases prior to trial, as each case was discussed on its individual merits with several different attorneys, but decisions in higher

AFTER: Rapidly nearing completion, Campbell Village low rent housing project will rehouse 154 low income families.



BEFORE: Site of Peralta Villa, Project Cal. 3-1, before clearance of substandard houses.

courts on problems arising from the operation of the Housing Authorities Law did not permit the trial court to proceed to dispose of the actions in a prompt manner.

Project Cal. 3-3, Lockwood Gardens, on which the loan contract with USHA was made in December, 1940, will be constructed on 21 acres of vacant land situated in East Oakland. The tract originally comprising twenty-two acres was owned by one family. After a price agreeable to both parties was determined, acquisition and transfer of title to the Authority presented no difficulties.

The Authority has given careful attention to questions raised regarding the choice of sites. Careful planning with consideration for changing city patterns has convinced the Authority that the three sites will prove valuable additions to the physical and social betterment of our city.

A most significant development resulting from the Authority's purchase of these properties is the impetus given to the real estate market. Our records at the present time show that seventy-seven owners of properties on the sites have purchased new homes, eleven owners have built and eight tenants have purchased homes. Many more will purchase outside of our knowledge and it is likely that a high percentage of the \$736,000 spent for land by the Authority will be reinvested, benefiting the realtors of Oakland.

AFTER: Site of Peralta Villa, Project Cal. 3-1, partially cleared just before construction began in December, 1940.





# RELOCATION

Since the Housing Authority, for its first two projects, chose sites on which buildings had to be demolished before construction could take place, it was necessary to make provisions for the relocation of the families who lived on the sites. In order that such families might secure homes elsewhere with as little inconvenience as possible, the Housing Authority established a Relocation Office on the project.

It was the desire of the Housing Authority to help these families secure homes elsewhere which were as good as or better than those which they formerly occupied, at rents not substantially higher. In order to facilitate this work, the following information was secured from each family: The number of persons in the family, the number of rooms occupied, the facilities and general condition of the dwelling, the rent the family paid, the income and economic condition of the family, and the general location in which the family preferred to live.

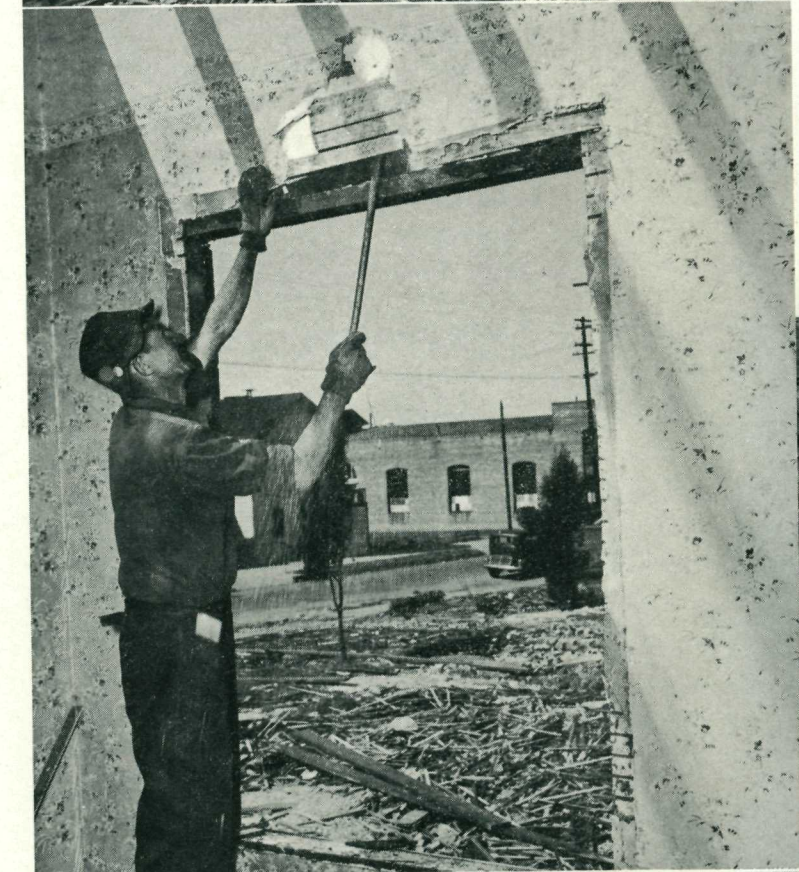
From these basic facts, secured by visits to the homes in the projects, certain generalizations were made regarding the families living on the two sites. Only eighteen per cent of the families were found to be owners of the homes in which they lived. With these eighteen per cent there was no relocation problem, as they usually bought or built homes elsewhere.

Of the tenant families, who comprised the remaining 82% of the population on the sites, 71% were Negro, the remainder white, with the exception of four Oriental. Families paid an average rent of \$15.92. This figure is low, however, since it includes the rents paid by roomers. Actually the rents paid by families of five averaged about \$22. Rents were in most cases for substandard dwellings of from four to five rooms. Eighty-three per cent of the families had incomes of less than \$90 a month, and of those who had incomes under this figure, 66% were on some form of relief, a definite liability area draining huge amounts of public funds that could be used elsewhere in a constructive manner.

Even with the most earnest efforts of the Relocation Staff, the problem was a very difficult one, and demanded the utmost cooperation on the part of the tenants. Listings of dwellings for rent were secured from the various real estate brokers and made available to all tenants. Likewise, by independent surveys made in the adjacent areas, a large number of vacancies were found and made available that were being rented by the owners and not listed with any broker.

The cooperation of various social agencies was also enlisted. In many cases, both the SRA and the Alameda County Charities Commission increased the rent allowances for their clients when it was shown to the satisfaction of the agency that the housing conditions were being improved.

The latter consideration has been of great importance in the relocation of tenants. In every instance, the Relocation Staff has endeavored to secure an improvement in the housing conditions of the tenant families, despite the difficulty of doing so. While it has not been possible to accomplish this end in every case, the staff has done so in a large majority of cases and has established a friendly, cooperative relationship with the tenant families. Wherever possible, tenants who were moved from the site will be given first preference for tenancy in the new project.



Down they come! The old, substandard houses torn down to make room for the Oakland Housing Authority's two low rent housing projects now under construction in West Oakland.



## PUBLIC HOUSING STANDARDS

Nathan Straus, the Administrator of the United States Housing Authority, said, "The housing built under the Wagner-Steagall Act will be minimal housing—homes that are clean and decent and sunny—but homes built to standards set at the minimum, compatible with decency and comfort." The Administrator also said, "In all cases the projects will be designed to last sixty years, which while it somewhat increases the initial cost, greatly decreases the upkeep cost over the life of the project." The replacement of blighted structures by modern structures designed to last for a period of sixty years will be a major civic improvement in any city.

Oakland's housing projects will consist of groups of individual buildings arranged in courts. Normally each building will contain from 10 to 12 dwelling units and their location and design makes a maximum amount of air and light available to the tenants. The livable space around the buildings in this type of project is emphasized and seldom is more than fifteen to twenty per cent of the land actually occupied by buildings.

The construction material of Cal. 3-1 and Cal. 3-2 will be reinforced concrete with a wood frame interior. The next section of this report deals fully with structural details.

Metropolitan Oakland borders San Francisco Bay on the mainland shore. A growing area, with a population already over 500,000, this new and industrious city must not be blighted by slums. Background shows southern portion of San Francisco Bay, over 30 miles distant.

The individual dwelling units in the buildings will vary in size from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  rooms. Their arrangement will differ according to the type of building. In the row type house, the individual dwelling units are two stories in height, each has a private entrance on the first floor, and a tenant maintained lawn and garden. In the flat type, the individual units are arranged on either the first or second floors, the second floor units being entered by means of an outside balcony. Each first floor unit in the flat type construction has a tenant maintained lawn and garden on the living room side. A rather unique arrangement has been adopted for the latter in that all bed and living rooms on both floors face an open lawn and garden court, while the kitchen in the rear faces an automobile parking area.

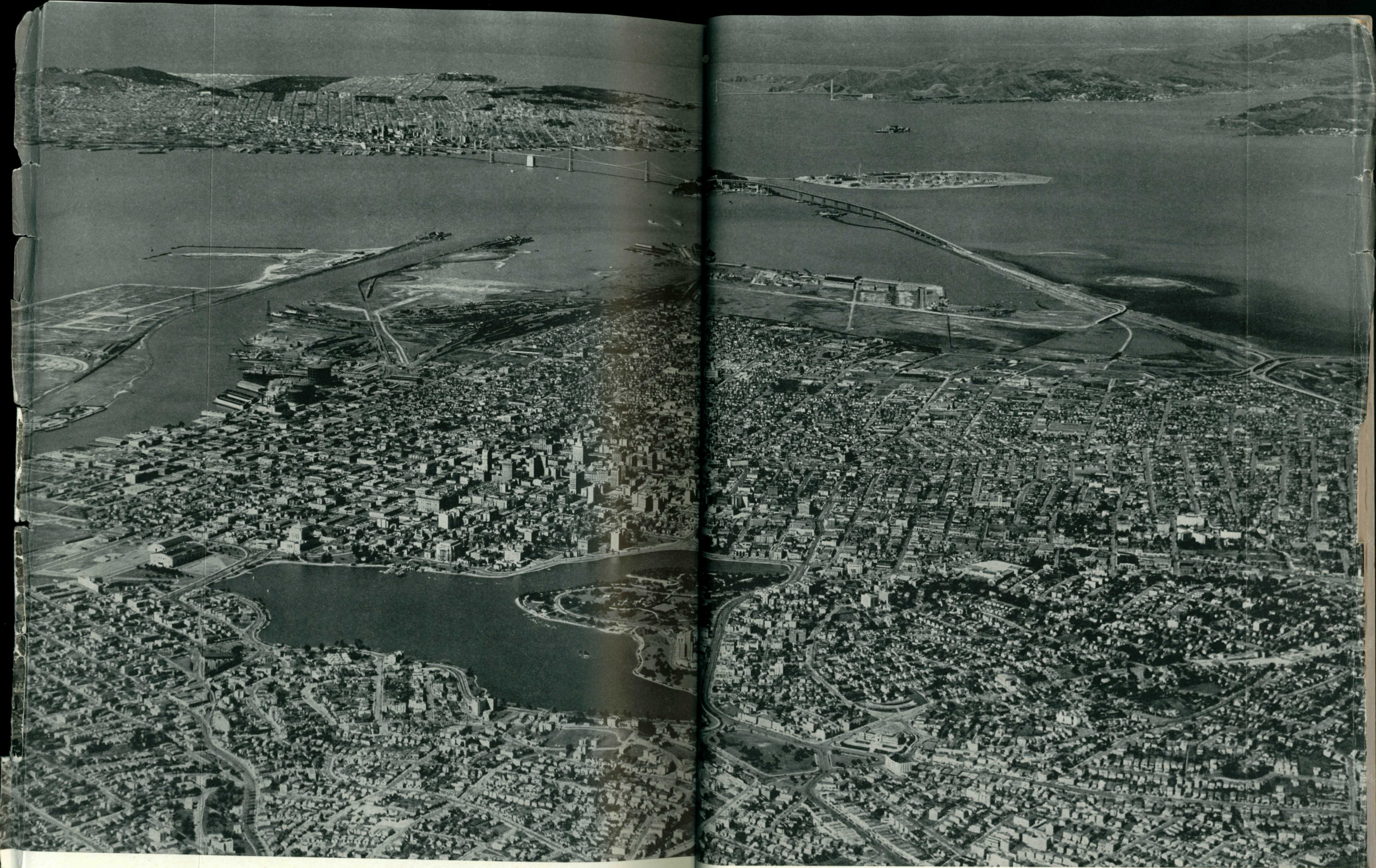
Individual automobile parking areas are provided for each tenant and for appearance they are located off the street in protected areas. No covering for the automobiles is provided because of added costs.

Greatest economy must be exercised in all low cost housing projects. They must be substantial and modern so as to last sixty years, but not costly nor so extravagant as to provide facilities not normally made available to persons of average income. For most of us some form of individual gas air heating unit in one, two or three rooms is sufficient. Therefore, the tenants in these low rent housing projects are not to be provided with steam heat,

Aerial View of the two Low Rent Housing Projects in West Oakland—Peralta Villa and Campbell Village. The continued usefulness of adjacent schools is now protected—for blocks of blighted houses have been eliminated. For the first time in 15 years new residential building permits are issued in this area. New life is substituted for a downward trend of private and public property.

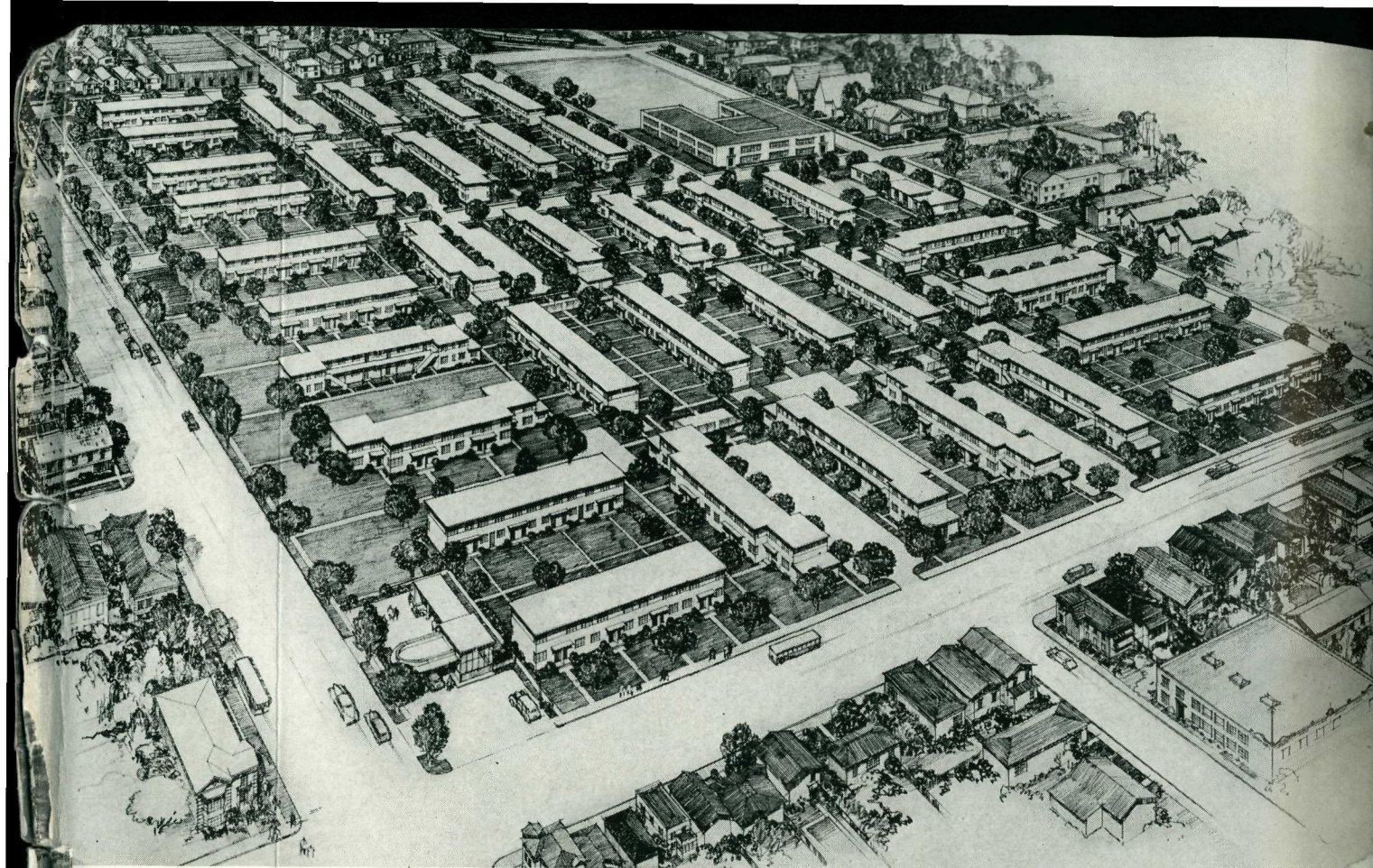






THE METROPOLITAN OAKLAND AREA . . . ON THE CONTINENTAL SHORE OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL HARBORS.

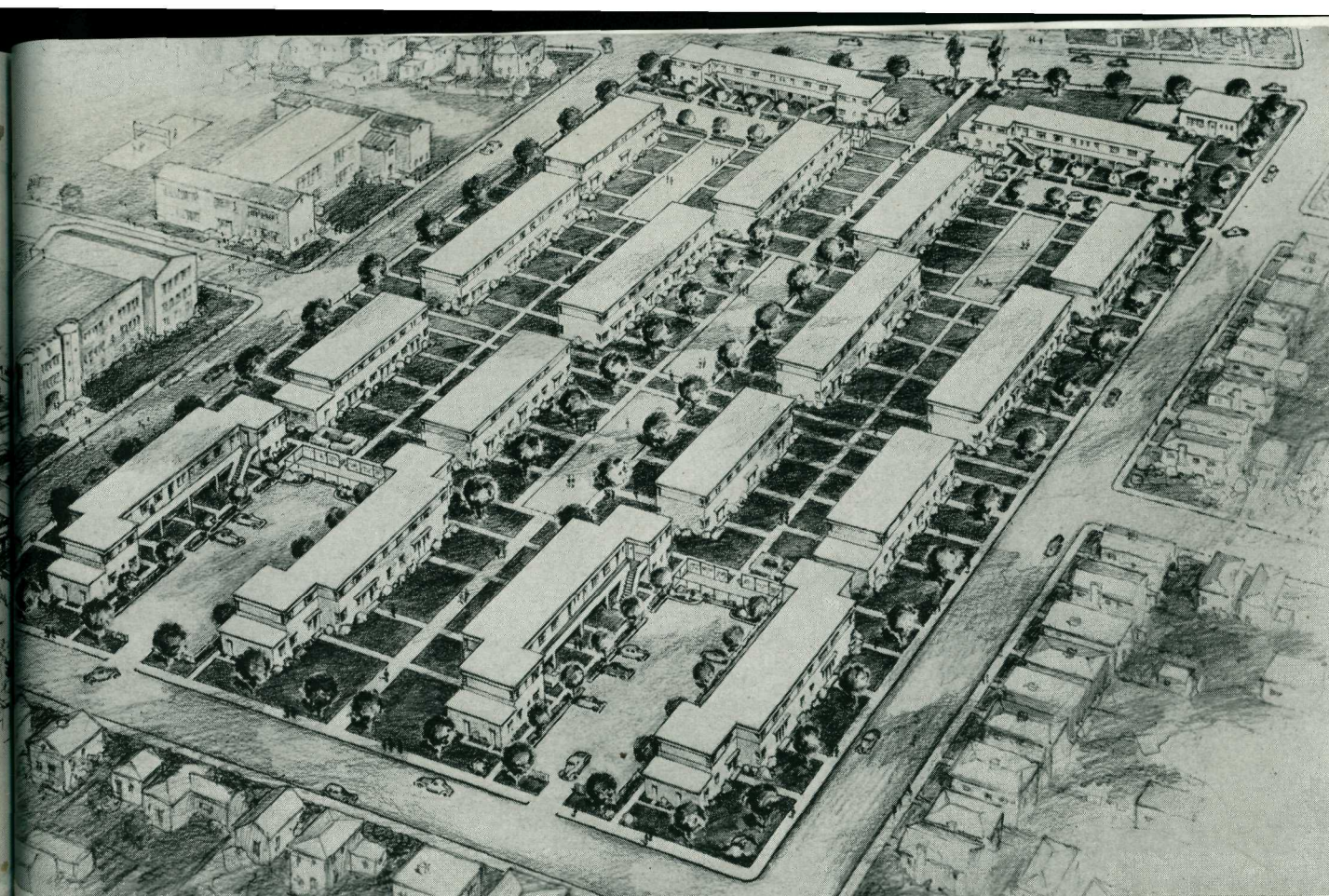




Architect's drawing of Peralta Villa, Project Cal. 3-1. An opportunity for a new type of life will be possible for each of the 396 families of low income when the project opens in February, 1942.

even though it might cause a slightly additional cost over a period of sixty years. Certain facilities are not provided which we have become accustomed to. For illustration, we normally think that it is quite necessary for all clothes closets to have doors. From the low cost housing point of view it is the closet that is important and not the door. Commissioner Rheinstein, Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority in 1939, first applied this saving in the Red Hook and Queensbridge Housing Projects housing about 11,000 persons. By eliminating closet doors in the dwelling units, enough money was made available to house about a hundred people in extra apartments.

Furnishings will include ranges and linoleum for the kitchens, as well as modern and sanitary bathroom equipment. Otherwise, the dwelling unit is unfurnished, and we anticipate lively competition among the tenants in "fixing up" their own units. How they can be encouraged and assisted to attractively decorate and furnish their homes with as little expenditure as possible will be an important part of the management's duties. An experiment in Holly Courts in San Francisco, the first low rent housing project in California has proved most successful. A similar arrangement will probably be attempted in Oakland. The Oakland Housing Authority desires to provide the tenants with more than mere shelter.



Architect's drawing of Campbell Village, Cal. 3-2. Playgrounds, lawns and community activities provided by Public Low-Rent Housing Projects cannot fail to make growing children better and happier citizens.

## EQUIVALENT ELIMINATION

Relocation of tenants and demolition of structures on the site followed the acquisition of property. The Authority was fortunate in being able to conduct these activities gradually as the parcels were purchased, thus saving considerable time. Separate demolition and construction contracts were let for Peralta Villa, each covering several blocks in the site. They were successfully bid by the firms of C. F. Roberts, Horton & Gilman and Joseph D. Ballinger & Co., all of Oakland, California. Single bids by the large national wrecking contractors for demolition of the entire site of Peralta Villa of 170 parcels would have cost the Authority considerably more than did the bids on the separate blocks by the small local firms. The demolition of 54 parcels in the Campbell Village project was included in the construction contract. Thus our experience definitely proved that demolition on clearance sites should be in advance of construction, as it results in economy, is a material benefit in stimulating land owners to sell their property, assists in the relocation of tenants and owners, and enables construction to proceed immediately upon the awarding of the construction contract upon the cleared portions of the site.

In order to benefit by the construction of a low rent housing project the USHA requires that the city must adopt an agreement whereby the Housing Authority and the municipality will work together in eliminating substandard dwellings throughout the city equal to the number of dwelling units erected on the project site. Such an agreement was passed by the Oakland City Council on July 13, 1938.



The housing shortage in Oakland has made the equivalent elimination problem considerably more difficult than it ordinarily would have been. To compel demolition of all unsafe and insanitary structures would be to drive many families into even worse housing and to cause serious overcrowding. Therefore, the Health, Fire and Building Departments have had to proceed slowly in this work in order to prevent serious hardships to low income families. Nevertheless, the fact that 137 dwelling units have been eliminated through the efforts of these departments since the organization of the Housing Authority, indicates that progress has been made in this aspect of the Authority's program. By December, 1940, 80% of the necessary demolition had been accomplished. It is expected that the remainder will be accomplished before the completion of the projects.

## CONSTRUCTION

The Housing Authority of the City of Oakland is now rushing its \$4,500,000 construction program by which it will ultimately provide approximately 922 new dwelling units for the city's low income families. Plans for three low rent housing projects have been made under the present administration. Two are now underway and a third is rapidly taking shape. In order of actual development, the three projects are as follows:

**Campbell Village, Cal. 3-2:** This 154 unit project is being constructed on a site bounded by 8th, 9th, Campbell and Willow Streets. Contracts were awarded to K. E. Parker Co., at \$378,000 (general); L. J. Kruse Co., at \$51,090 and \$3,895 (plumbing and heating respectively); and Clifford Electric Company at \$16,700 (electrical work). The project is forty per cent complete at time of writing (Dec. 31, 1940).

**Peralta Villa, Cal. 3-1:** Peralta Villa is located on a site bounded by 8th, 12th, Cypress and Union Streets and will contain 396 dwelling units. Contracts went to Monson Bros., at \$938,831 (general); L. J. Kruse Co., at \$133,970 and \$8,377 (plumbing and heating); and Clifford Electric Co., at \$37,300 (electrical work). The project has been under construction since December 2, 1940.

A \$1,441,000 loan-contract was approved December 10th, 1940, by President Roosevelt for a third project, Cal. 3-3, to be called Lockwood Gardens. The project will probably go out for bids about April 15, 1941. Plans and specifications now being prepared by the Board of Architects call for 372 units to be located on the south side of East 14th Street at 66th Avenue. The 372 units will include 80 three and one-half room units; 228 four and one-half room units; 59 five and one-half room units; and 5 six and one-half room units. Altogether there will be 1674 rooms.

Contrary to general belief that the over-all construction bid is the lowest, it has been the experience of this Authority that segregation of the construction work from the mechanical work results in considerable savings. If the lowest over-all bids had been accepted on the two projects under construction, it would have increased the development cost by \$103,600 on the 550 dwelling units, and would have prevented the awarding of the mechanical contracts to local Oakland contractors.

Peralta Villa is the largest housing project now under construction. Some of its 396 units will be available for occupancy next fall. It will contain 152 three and one-half room units; 64 four room units; 142 four and one-half room units; and 38 five and one-half room units. Altogether there will be 1636 rooms.

Units will be located in 16 flat buildings and 19 row houses. Flat buildings will be two stories high and will contain three and one-half and four room units. The row houses, also two stories high, will contain four and one-half and five and one-half room units.

All structures will be of reinforced concrete construction with fireproof composition graveled flat roofs. The exterior concrete surface and all openings will be painted. Specifications for interiors call for concrete first floor covered with asphalt tile, with wood frame second floor construction finished with oak flooring. Interior walls will be plastered. Metal sash, outside French doors and interior wood doors are also called for.

The administration building will be a two-story structure with the first floor devoted to community and social facilities, project management office and maintenance supply office, and the second floor to general executive offices for the Oakland Housing Authority. The community and social facilities in the administration building include a social room (32' by 47'); craft room (23' by 23'); nursery-library (23' by 23'); and community kitchen and toilets. These rooms can be combined as a large hall when necessary.

The three and one-half room units will contain a living room, combined dining room and kitchen and a bedroom. The four room units will have two bedrooms.

Complete dwelling units will be located on either the first or second floor. Second floor units are reached by an outside balcony with egress at each end of the balcony. First floor units will have both front and back yards.

Furnishings for each unit will include a bathtub, toilet, washbowl, sink, kitchen stove and individual circulating gas air heater. There will be a common hot water heater in each building to serve the individual dwelling units. Other facilities include closets, pantry and cabinets. Linoleum will cover the kitchen floors.

Four and one-half room units will have a living room, combined dining room and kitchen and two bedrooms. The five and one-half room units will have three bedrooms. Dwelling units will be located on both the first and second floors with an individual private stairway to the second floor rooms. Each unit has an individual front and back yard. Living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens will be on the first floor, with other rooms on the second. Furnishings will be the same as in the smaller units.

Community facilities at Peralta Villa will include storage space, laundry and drying yards, sitting areas, preschool play areas, spray pools and garbage disposal.

Buildings will cover 19.92% of the entire site. The landscaping of the grounds is included in the general construction contract and gardens, trees, plants and shrubs will be laid out between the buildings in a symmetrical plan. Individual back yards will be cultivated and fertilized ready for the planting of a lawn or whatever the tenant may desire. Open parking areas, paved with bituminous pavement will be located between courts of buildings. There will be sufficient parking space for eighty per cent of the tenants.

The tentative rent schedule will range from \$11.50 to \$19.50 per month. A minimum additional charge will be made for gas and electricity.

Campbell Village will contain 48 three and one-half room units; 24 four room units; 62 four and one-half room units; and 20 five and one-half room units—a total of 154 dwelling units. There will be 653 rooms. These units will be housed in six flat buildings and 12 row houses. There will be a one-story administration building containing a social room, community kitchen, library, storage facilities, toilets, the project office and a lobby. In most respects the project will be similar to Peralta Villa, fully described above. Campbell Village will be ready for occupancy in June.

Prevailing union wages are being paid the men employed for the construction of Oakland's three low rent housing projects. W. P. A. labor has not been used nor will it be used in the future.



## WHAT KIND OF TENANTS?

Who are the people that are to be rehoused in Oakland's low rent housing projects? They are self-respecting and self-supporting workmen and their families, who, through no fault of their own, have been forced to live in the substandard and insanitary housing available to persons of low income. The families moving into Oakland's first projects will be those in the lowest income group. It is necessary that their income be **not more** than five times the amount of rent to be paid, or if there are three or more minor dependents, six times the amount of rent. Parents with young children whose present dwelling is substandard will be considered first. Private enterprise cannot furnish decent homes with minimum standards for these families, at rents they can afford to pay, and still make a reasonable profit. In order to keep the rents of the project within the income limits of the families for whom they are built, the project receives a yearly subsidy, not to exceed three per cent per year, from the government.

"Give a dog a bad name," they say, "and he will live up to it." Exponents of low rent housing have given the phrase a human application, and have maintained that if you give people dirty, dismal surroundings, they are likely to keep them dirty and dismal; but if you give them decent, clean surroundings, the same people are likely to keep them clean and decent. That this assertion has proven true is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the USHA low rent housing program.

It has been said by many critics of low rent housing for persons of low income, "People who live in slums are naturally dirty; they like to be that way. Put them in these new clean houses and they'll keep coal in the bathtub."

These doubters seem to have been doleful without justification, however, for according to one outstanding public houser, the greatest difficulty one new project had was to keep the housewives from scrubbing all the wax off the floors. Nathan Straus, Director of the USHA, reports that not only have better standards of cleanliness been adopted by families who live in USHA-aided projects, but there have been notable improvements in character and attitude.

Campbell Village and Peralta Villa, Oakland's first housing projects, will be comfortable and attractive places in which to live. Each family will have a small plot of ground on which it may grow flowers or vegetables as preferred. Transportation facilities are close by so that the head of the family may reach his place of employment easily and quickly. The breadwinner of a low-income family, no matter what his income may be, should be able to enjoy the quiet privacy of his own home after the day's work. This has perhaps been hard to find in the past, with not only his own family, but roomers, boarders and others "doubled up," living in the same cramped and inadequate quarters to relieve the strain on the family budget. In the housing project he will be able to find privacy and peace. There will be relaxation and recreation in taking care of the garden which is part of the dwelling unit. There is amusement to be found in the round of community and project activities sponsored by the tenants themselves.

The mother of the family will have more leisure time by allowing the children to play on the playground where they are safe from automobiles and accidents. Also, the new dwelling will be easier to keep clean than the old one, and the new modern equipment in the kitchen makes preparation of the family's meals less work. Perhaps too, the mother will belong to a Sewing Club, Homemaking Club, Dramatics Group or Forum Discussion Group, all organized within the project by the tenants. The man of the house may be interested in



Architect's sketch of Dwellings at Lockwood Gardens, Cal. 3-3. Children of parents having a low income can now be proud of their homes.

helping to publish a project newspaper, which besides carrying local gossip and news will be an instrument whereby the management can get its announcements to all the tenants at once. Both parents will probably belong to a bridge club meeting once or twice a month in the large social hall available to all tenants and families in the neighborhood. There will be ample room for each member of the family, and for the first time, many children will have their own room separate from their parents. Privacy is important for the children of the family, too.

It seems impossible to believe that in 1940 there are children who have never had a bath in a bathtub. It also seems impossible to believe that some of these tenant families are actually paying more rent for their inadequate, overcrowded and substandard homes than they will be paying for their new, safe and sanitary ones in the project.

We know, however, that slum dwellers not only have the highest rate of disease, but they do not always make good citizens. For every slum dweller who overcomes his environment and rises to the top, it is estimated that 10,000 eventually fall by the wayside and become "wards" of the State. These people, for economic reasons, cannot better their lot in life. Yet they are entitled to rear their children in clean, sanitary and safe surroundings. Public housing begins here. It does not solve all the problems of the slum dweller, only the physical problem of bad housing.

Life in USHA projects—where cleanliness is the watchword, where there is an abundance of light and sunshine and space, where there is no overcrowding—has brought an end to many of the evils which are part of slum life and constantly surround families who live in such sordid surroundings. Juvenile delinquency is practically non-existent in the new projects. Family and neighborhood quarrels have been reduced. Incomes may be no larger, but the low rents give them more money to spend and everywhere parents seem to have found the situation in which they can create a healthy, happy home life for themselves and their children to enjoy and remember. In the new home, there is something to be proud of, something to live up to, something to awaken the best impulses in the people who live there. This is not just housing. This is a chance to make a new life. Is it any wonder, then, that new lives are being made, that old habits are changing and that new ones are taking their place, habits of cleanliness, responsibility and cooperation!

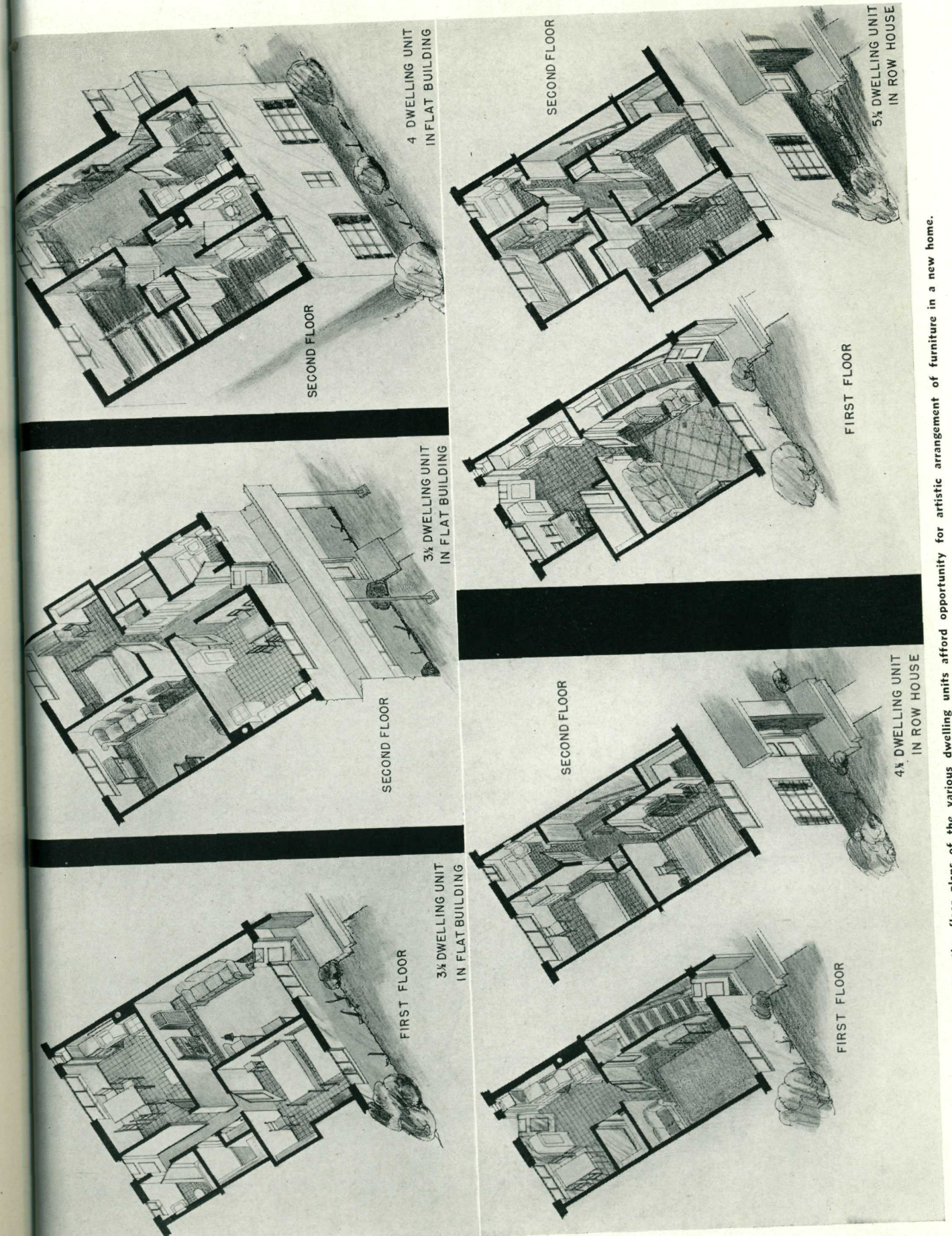


# PUBLIC RELATIONS

"For the last decade, the desire for a better civilization has been working like a ferment in American life. The movement itself is much older than the 1930's; it began with the founding of the country itself. But each generation rediscovers it, restates it, revalues it, and takes further steps toward achieving it." These are the words of Lewis Mumford, one of America's foremost city planners. Even though such trends are constantly taking place in our culture, it is difficult to undertake a vast program such as public housing and have that program and its potential benefits to society understood by the general public. Therefore, it is necessary from the very beginning of the program to have some medium of exchange whereby the Housing Authority can avail itself of the ideas and needs of the community, and also make known to the public just what the objectives of the housing program are. This is where the Public Relations staff functions to advantage.

Considerable activity has taken place in the field of Public Relations during the past year, and much has been accomplished. The results have been highly gratifying and worthwhile. A campaign of public education embracing radio programs, newspaper articles and lectures was inaugurated and was extremely well received. The film "Housing in Our Time" was shown to over 6000 persons at the Oakland Home Exposition. In addition, some 7000 pieces of literature were distributed, and explanatory talks given to large numbers of the 82,000 visitors at the Exposition. Lectures before civic, labor, service and welfare groups have been a feature of the educational program, as have numerous addresses on public housing to students of high and grammar schools throughout the city. Feature stories have appeared in all Oakland newspapers, and the press has been generous in donating space for items of special interest.

While much has been accomplished along this line, there is still more to be done in the future. Your Authority plans to continue its program of community activities and public relations during the coming year.



The attractive floor plans of the various dwelling units afford opportunity for artistic arrangement of furniture in a new home.



# THE FUTURE

Now that construction has begun on the Oakland housing projects, the Housing Authority is looking to the future aspects of its program, those of tenant selection, management and community activities.

With so many families in need of low rent housing in Oakland, the problem of selecting families for tenancy in the projects becomes one of the utmost importance. It is a problem that requires judgment and understanding for its proper solution. Your Housing Authority is fortunate to have the excellent reports of other Authorities throughout the country at its disposal from which practical suggestions can be obtained.

Tenants must, of course, primarily be in the low income range, and must live in substandard housing. These are not the only considerations, however. Since the rents

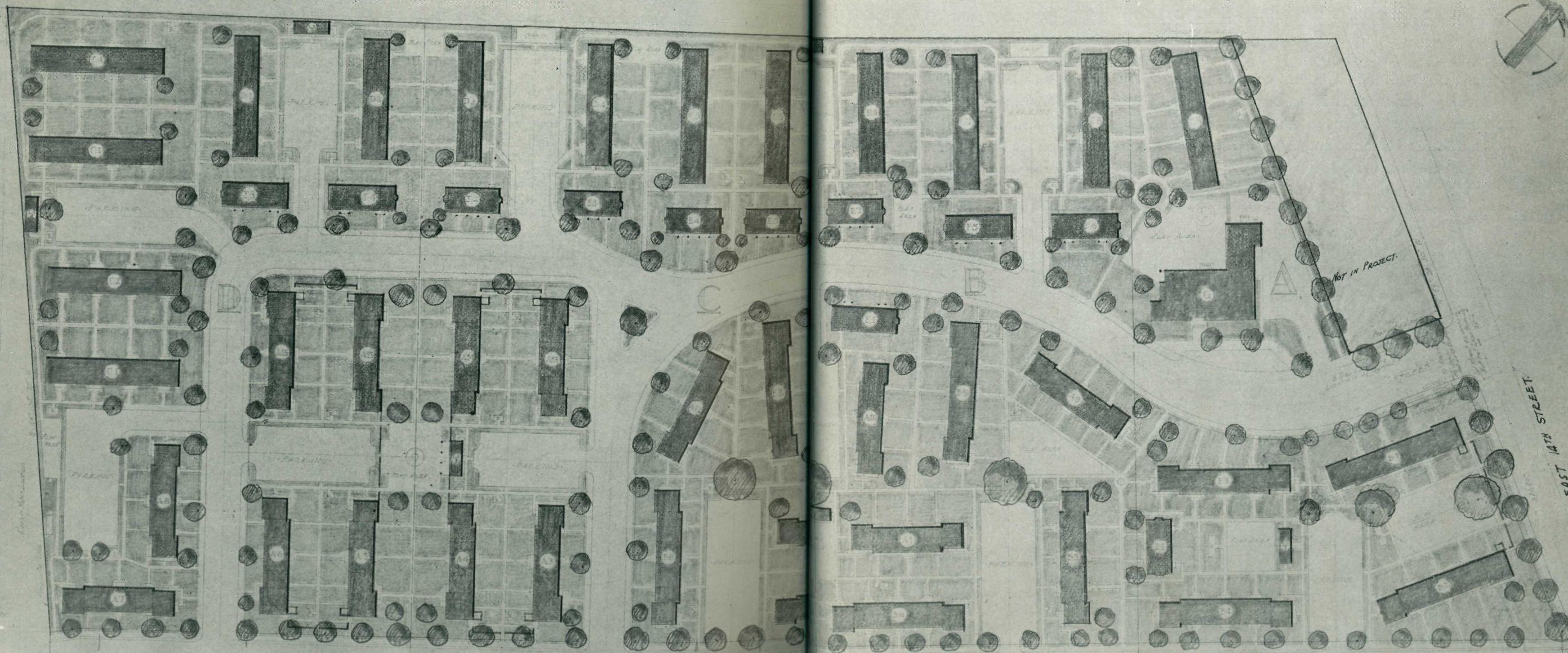
paid by the tenants must help to amortize the loan granted by the United States Housing Authority, the local Authority must select families who have reliable rent paying habits, and who appear to be responsible and cooperative.

There are many such considerations which the Authority must weigh in its selection of the 550 families who are to occupy the projects now under construction. Need and ability to pay must both be carefully judged, in order that the projects may be of service to those for whom the program was designated, hard-working, honest citizens whose incomes are so low that they cannot provide their families with adequate housing.

When tenants have been selected and the projects occupied, the problems of management assume the largest place in the program of the Authority. A management staff is to operate from an office located on the project site, and be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the projects, collection of rents, and for all relations between tenants and the Housing Authority.

The symmetry of design in the Site Plan for Lockwood Gardens, Cal. 3-3, is combined with maximum livability for families with children.

Parents in low rent housing projects rent without fear of giving the ages and number of their children.





In addition to conducting its projects on a sound and business-like basis, the Housing Authority is interested in seeing that there are pleasant relationships among the tenants and between the tenants and the people of the surrounding neighborhood. The Housing Authority believes that the projects should be the means of furthering a healthy, desirable neighborhood life, and thus has provided space and facilities for community activities. These facilities will be available not only to the tenants, but to others of the neighborhood who wish to avail themselves of the opportunities offered. Here tenants and neighbors may conduct club meetings, dances and recreational activities.

"Ours is one of those times in history," says Mr. Mumford, "when the dreamers will turn out to be the practical men." To clear the slums and rehouse the families living in them has been a dream of socially-minded, public-spirited citizens for years. In our generation we are at last seeing some of these dreams come true. Are they practical? We have only the word of the welfare workers on the subject. From a human interest point of view and apparently from a financial one, they are.

Previously in this report it has been pointed out that slums cost the taxpayers money. In every city throughout America, the reports of the Police and Health Departments show shocking conditions of crime and disease seemingly centered in the overcrowded, poverty-stricken areas where families live close together, sharing inadequate and often insanitary conditions. Privacy is unknown here; children and adults sleep three and four to a bed. Can any overworked slum mother keep her children clean and neat, and her home attractive and tidy with the facilities she has to work with? Can any of us imagine how difficult and tedious it must be to bathe small children daily when every drop of water has to be heated over a stove? Perhaps she must also fight unceasingly to keep vermin and rats from infesting the home. Her children play in the streets where there is constant danger from automobiles and accidents. A discouraging outlook it seems, but the future now holds promise.

In a survey map contained in the 1939 report of Oakland's Health Department a solid black mass shows in a certain area of our city, where one small black dot represents a known case of syphilis or gonorrhea. Right in the center of this blighted section the Oakland Housing Authority is erecting its first two low rent housing projects. This model housing will go a long way toward helping to improve the health conditions of the neighborhood.

In Oakland our housing problem is not insurmountable. A good start has been made toward remedying the substandard conditions here. The Housing Authority is exerting all its efforts and skill toward giving these low income families a new start. The tenants themselves through their connections with the surrounding community cannot help but spread this new way of life. The benefits to be derived to the community itself will be inestimable. But there is still much to be done!

## CITY OF OAKLAND-HOUSING AUTHORITY COOPERATION

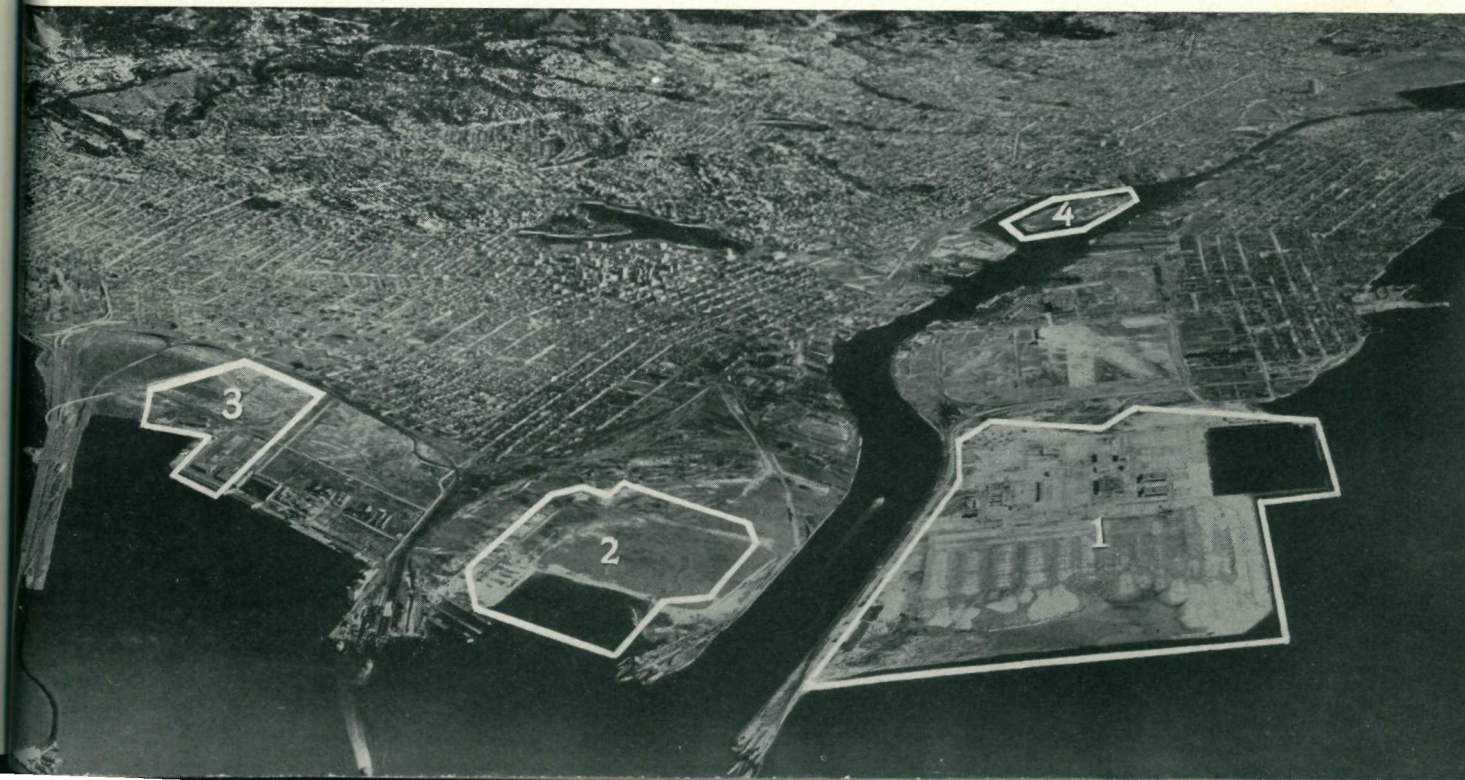
The construction of the two housing projects in West Oakland, Peralta Villa and Campbell Village, required the vacation and abandonment of several streets running through the project sites. The City Council of Oakland by passing the street vacation ordinances made over 132,000 square feet of streets a part of the project sites. Thus, the city eliminated street maintenance expenses, and permitted the creation of a new community center having a modern city plan. The organized planning adopted in the design of the site plan also eliminated many hazardous street intersections without affecting the accessibility of the dwelling units to the streets and at the same time provided private parking areas.

The various city departments have long recognized the value of this type of housing to improve the city plan, and offered many valuable suggestions of benefit to the Oakland Housing Authority.

The Authority is also grateful to the City Council of Oakland for the passage of a new cooperation and equivalent elimination agreement in January, 1940, which assured the Authority of its support. Approval of the agreement enabled the expenditure of the \$1,500,000 balance of the original \$5,000,000 earmarked for Oakland by the United States Housing Authority.

**DEFENSE ACTIVITIES NEED HOUSING.** All three projects—Peralta Villa (Cal. 3-1), Campbell Village (Cal. 3-2) and Lockwood Gardens (Cal. 3-3)—are strategically located to serve the housing needs of defense workers. More than \$139,500,000 in contracts have been awarded to Metropolitan Oakland shipbuilding, manufacturing and industrial concerns. Expenditures for Government Projects total \$62,200,000.

GOVERNMENT PROJECT	AUTHORIZATION	PERSONNEL	AVAILABLE HOUSING PROJECT
1. Alameda Naval Air Station . . . . .	\$20,000,000	6,000	All three
2. Oakland Naval Supply Depot . . . . .	17,000,000	500	Cal. 3-1, 3-2
3. Oakland Army Supply Base . . . . .	20,000,000	1,000	Cal. 3-1, 3-2
4. Government Island . . . . .	2,500,000	600	Cal. 3-3
5. Oakland Municipal Airport Naval Hangar, Barracks and Field Improvements (not shown; located off upper right hand corner)	1,200,000	250	Cal. 3-3
6. Western Research Laboratory (not shown; located off photo near center of left hand side)	1,500,000	250	





## FINANCING OF LOW RENT HOUSING

Although public housing is now one of the accepted objectives of good, progressive government, many persons have not realized that a large part of the public low rent housing program is now financed by private banks and lending institutions in cooperation with the federal lending agency, the United States Housing Authority. Originally the USHA financed 90% of all loans and advanced funds to the local housing authorities, such as the Housing Authority of the City of Oakland, at interest rates from 2½% to 3% per annum. However, due to the excellent security of the notes and bonds of the various local authorities, the large banking and lending institutions have formed investment groups for the purpose of purchasing these securities. They have combined their huge cash reserves and purchased over \$547,409,000 worth of temporary loan notes of the local authorities at competitive public sales at interest rates averaging about 0.50% (½ of 1%). The local authorities sell the balance of 10% of their bonds to private investors.

The Oakland Housing Authority has now borrowed on this basis \$1,500,000 of its \$5,000,000 program financed at an interest rate of 0.39%. Thus, of the original \$800,000,000 of the USHA program, nearly three-quarters of it is now financed by private capital at substantial savings over the rate of interest the USHA is required to charge for its loans.

The participation of private capital in loans to finance public housing shows the confidence these investors have in the soundness of the housing program. At first it was believed that public housing would cost the government too much money, but now it promises to cost the federal taxpayer almost nothing and saves the local taxpayer money by bettering living conditions, thereby reducing health, fire and police services. The Housing Authorities, as in Oakland, are public bodies responsible to their respective communities. When one considers the benefits derived from the housing program, the approximately \$14,000 loss in taxes, assuming they were all paid, on property purchased for the three projects here in Oakland is of little consequence. Funds used in the purchase of this property were turned into other forms of assessable property by the respective property owners, and the projects have stimulated new business activities near them, thus further offsetting loss in taxes, if any.

The United States Housing Authority (USHA) should not be confused with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), as the former loans and secures financing for **public** corporations known as local housing authorities, while the latter guarantees the loans made by private banks to **private** persons. Both serve in the field of new housing, which has recently become a pressing need as a result of national defense activities.

In the financial operation of the public housing program throughout the United States it must also be remembered that while the government and private capital have assisted in its original financing, it remains for the tenants in the project to pay for costs of utilities

(gas, electricity, water and heat), repair, maintenance, replacement, operation and debt service. The contribution made by these low income tenant families toward their own welfare is symbolic of true Americanism, and worthy of our support.

Present plans will demand that a portion of their rent go toward the payment of interest and amortization of the development cost of the housing project. It is estimated that at an interest rate of 2½% the annual contributions of USHA necessary to assist the projects to be self-amortizing and self-supporting will not exceed \$11.00 per dwelling per month. Were it possible to maintain the present interest rate of .39% now being paid on Term Loans on funds borrowed by the Oakland Housing Authority, an increased payment by the tenant of approximately \$5.80 per month, or \$69.60 per year per dwelling unit would make the projects self-liquidating and self-supporting. If this additional charge were made, it would raise the lowest estimated rental (including utilities) from \$14 per dwelling per month to \$19.80, and the highest estimated rental from \$23 per dwelling per month to \$28.80. The objective of the program is to keep the rents as low as possible so that the low income families will not pay in excess of one-fifth of their income in rent, and it is required by law that no family have an income more than five times the rent charged unless there are three or more dependents, in which case it may be six times the rent. However, it is not improbable, due to a general increased standard of living, a rise in the wage scale, and reduced operation and maintenance costs of the project, that no federal subsidy will eventually be necessary.

Sir Raymond Unwin, English housing expert, said in an address in 1933,

" . . . housing does not materially, and to some extent does not at all, increase the burden of debt. You are not creating a debt when you are building houses. You may borrow the money to build them, but you are not creating a debt. You are changing what is at present an idle credit doing no good to anybody into what will be a permanent revenue-earning asset, and I think the community is richer for exchanging idle credit into the form of definite and permanent revenue-earning assets."

The financing and construction by our government of public improvements such as bridges, highways, public buildings and housing, that are **self-supporting** and in part or entirely self-amortizing, in effect improve our welfare and build our nation **without cost**. Investment in property and human welfare are indestructible assets of our democracy.



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